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in Geneva

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Statement by the United Kingdom to the UN Human Rights Council Special Session on Libya, 25 February 2011

Peter Gooderham, Permanent Representative

The United Kingdom strongly supports the statement delivered by Hungary on behalf of the European Union. We have joined States from all regions in requesting this Special Session in order that this Council can respond, as it should, to the extremely worrying developments on the ground in Libya.

The United Kingdom wants to send a clear message to the Libyan regime that the world is not just watching and making statements. We are and will continue to take action. As others have noted, the UN Human Rights Council has the specific mandate to react to urgent and chronic situations. We applaud the Council for meeting today in a special session and call on the Council to continue its engagement, taking the steps necessary to ensure that those responsible for the awful human rights violations that are currently occurring in Libya are held to account.

The Libyan Government is trying to stop the world seeing what is happening in Libya. We are appalled by the levels of violence unleashed by the Libyan Government. The use of military force against civilians and the attacks on funeral processions have caused deep anger throughout the country and across the world. We are also deeply disturbed by reports of Libyan planes being ordered to bomb their own people and by Qaddafi's public threats of violence in order to hold on to power.

We join the High Commissioner in calling for an international inquiry into the violence and thank her for the offer of expertise. The United Kingdom will do everything we can to make sure those responsible in the Libyan regime are held accountable for their actions.

Confronted with the deteriorating situation that exists in the country the role of the United Nations and the international community is as crucial as ever. We welcome the attention given by the UN and the statement from the UN Security Council. We

also warmly welcome the recent statements from the Secretary General of the OIC and Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union and the action on Libya by the Council of the League of Arab States.

Mr President,

It is clear that the regime is shamefully failing in its responsibility to protect its people, and citizens from third States, from the very forces that should be upholding their human rights. We have to ask ourselves a serious question. Should a State that has such blatant disregard for the right to life be allowed to sit on the Human Rights Council? The General Assembly may suspend the rights of a Member in the Council of a Member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights.

Finally, the United Kingdom strongly encourages all members of the Council to support the draft resolution that is currently being negotiated. It is clear that there is wide agreement within the Council that the Libyan Government has behaved in a manner incompatible with its international human rights obligations. Adopting the resolution before us by consensus will further demonstrate the international community's support for the people of Libya.

Thank you Mr President